you, through half-shut eyes by brawlite

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Summary:

Two parts sugary sweet summer vibes, one part snarky instagram stories, and three parts mutual pining.

you, through half-shut eyes

Author's Note:

- For ToAStranger.

  happy birthday, toastranger!

“Yeah, *uhhh*: strawberry, banana, and blue vanilla,” Billy says, teeth idly already chewing down on a pink plastic spoon. He’s trying to quit smoking, apparently, always chewing on *something* now. “*Please,*” he finishes with, flashing one of his trademark smiles.

He’s leaning against the shaved ice stand, just a few feet in front of Steve -- no shirt, no shoes, no problem. If he were a girl, he’d be flaunting some serious cleavage up at the blushing cashier, but he’s not, so the chick just gets a good view of Billy’s oiled, tanned, and shaved chest. She can’t even *see* his lower half, but that doesn’t stop Billy from twisting in such a way that his ass sticks out in those *tiny* red shorts of his. Showing off all his assets. Steve can’t help but roll his eyes after taking in the picture of him.

It’s a warm day, not too hot, but not too cold for the beach, either. Ocean breeze ruffling his hair, sun warm on his back, the sound of the boardwalk easy in his ears.

It’s really -- perfect, actually.

Steve had no real idea what to expect out of California, out of this little road trip-turned-summer vacation with Billy -- but it’s *good*. Seriously good.

Billy, like this, *here* in his element, is *good*. He’s *thriving*, clearly.

Steve had seen bits and pieces of this Billy before, shining through the rough while they were still in Hawkins, but.

But *this* Billy, with an ease underneath his skin and a constant grin on his face? This is a whole other animal than the Billy Steve got to know in Hawkins.

“Pretty boy,” Billy says, and Steve’s eyes tear away from the moles on Billy’s shoulders and back to his face, where Billy’s staring at him from behind his sunglasses.

Why doesn’t *Steve* have *his* sunglasses on? Jesus, it’s sunny. And if they *were* on, maybe Billy’d catch him staring *way* less.

“*What*?” Steve says, teeth digging into his cheek as he flicks his Ray Bans down from on top of his head to the bridge of his nose. The world goes a little purple.

“What flavor do you want?”

“Um. Pink lemonade?”

Billy makes a disgusted noise. “Of *all* the choices, Harrington, of the like *sixty flavors* they have, you choose *one* and you make it *pink lemonade?*”

“They have *thirty-five* flavors,” Steve says, leaning forward and tapping at the big hand-painted wood sign that says, in cheery pastel: *35 tasty flavors to choose from!* Which is a lot. But it’s not *sixty*.

“He’ll have pink lemonade, lychee, and passionfruit,” Billy says, passing over a five dollar bill.

And like, Steve *could’ve* paid. But Billy’s *weird* about money, doesn’t like Steve paying for *everything*, because Steve’s already shelling out for the airbnb they’re renting -- or rather Steve’s *trust* is, and like, it’s really *no big*, but Billy cares *anyway*. Feels like he’s not pulling his weight, or whatever.

So Steve doesn’t *fuss* about Billy shelling out some money for shaved ice, even though he would’ve rather paid. It’s fine. He’ll just buy groceries tonight while he sends Billy back for almond milk, or something.

“Thanks,” Steve says.

Billy grins around his spoon. “Don’t mention it, Harrington. You’ll love it, I promise. And if you don’t,” Billy bumps him with his shoulder, a little too hard, “I’ll finish it for you.”

“Wow. Real chivalrous of you.”

They hike it back to the beach, where they’ve got towels spread out under an ugly-as-hell beach umbrella that came with their rental. It’s supposed to look like a *palm tree* up top, but is too tacky to look *cool*.

Billy *loves* it. Refuses to set up on the beach without it.

The shaved ice is good. Better than any of the stuff Steve’s ever had back in Hawkins at the county fair. It’s like, made with real homemade syrup, or whatever. Not cloyingly sweet, just refreshing and solidly *good*.

If Steve were here alone, he probably would’ve ended up at some tourist trap, getting the same kinda shit he’d had back in Indiana. But with Billy leading the way, he’s only really ever seen the local side of the beach, only ever gone to the hole-in-the-wall places. Like this family run shaved-ice shack down one of the side alleys off the boardwalk.

“Wow, look at the rack on *that* chick,” Billy says, suddenly pointing somewhere that’s vaguely behind Steve.

Steve whipps around to look, but can only see guys playing volleyball.

When he turns back around, a chunk of his shaved ice is gone and Billy’s chomping down on a decidedly too-big bite of shaved ice that’s much *pinker* than his own, mouth open, like it’s a *little* too cold to eat all that much at once.

“*Hey*!”

“Wha?” Billy says, and he’s grinning*, grinning* a mile wide, even with his mouth full. He pokes Steve with his spoon (which: *gross)* after he swallows and says: “Your loss. You should pay better attention, pretty boy.”

“You *distracted* me,” Steve says, trying to steal some of Billy’s strawberry-banana-vanilla ice, but Billy moves too fast, is too gleefully unwilling to share.

“Hell *yeah* I distracted you. You’re such a sucker for girls in bikinis. You’d think you’d’ve gotten a little de-sensitized to that by now, but clearly *not*.”

And it’s *funny*, really. Because before Steve came to California with Billy, he knew Billy as this *chick-crazy* guy, always chasing up some girl’s skirt, always making a name for himself as Hawkins’ most eligible bachelor. Always making a point to shove Steve out of the limelight whenever possible. But in California, other than his usual flirting with all the people they interact with on the daily, he seems *really* not all that interested in girls.

Like, you’d *think* that all the eye candy around here would be making Billy crazy, but it’s not. Billy could care *less* that the sorority sisters in the house next to theirs sometimes walk around topless, or in too-sheer shirts. Yeah, he flirts with them when he’s picking up the paper in the mornings, but he doesn’t *look* at them, doesn’t seem to *appreciate the view* like Steve does. Like Steve *thought* that Billy would.

Maybe it’s just that California’s filled with hot people, that Billy’s gotten *bored* of seeing them all, de-sensitized like he thought Steve would be by now. Maybe in Hawkins he was just deprived of a any nice views and couldn’t stop looking when presented with something marginally better than average.

Steve finishes up his shaved ice before Billy can get another chance at it and then flops down on his back, tilting his head back so he can watch the bros playing volleyball upside down.

And it’s not just the *girls* in Cali that are attractive; it’s *everyone*.

When Steve looks up, Billy’s got his phone pointed at Steve and is *clearly* recording him.

“Oh my *god*,” Steve says, reaching for the phone in Billy’s hand.

Billy lets him snatch it. His lips are kind of purple, probably from the *blue vanilla* mixing with the *strawberry* of his shaved ice.

When Steve looks down at the screen, there’s an instagram story playing on repeat, waiting to be posted. It’s Steve, sprawled out on

the blanket, caught in *just* the right light to still look toned from basketball, with his head tilted, volleyball being played in the background. The video zooms in on the shirtless guys playing, then back to Steve. There's a floating hashtag somewhere around Steve's right nipple which says #NotSubtle. And then, of course, the water droplets emoji.

"I *can* delete it," Billy says. "But like…"

And they -- haven't exactly *talked* about this. But yeah, it's not really a *surprise:* Steve *thought* Billy's caught him looking at guys before, but Billy never *said* anything about it, so *Steve* never said anything either, just sort of generally hoping the whole thing would solve itself in some sort of reasonable fashion.

Ignoring problems until they go away is pretty much Steve's modus operandi.

So far, in life or whatever, it's worked.

Of *course* this is how Billy'd bring it up, though. By throwing shade at Steve on instagram.

Whatever. Steve hits post and saves it to Billy's story.

Then, he takes a picture of Billy, sprawled out over his own towel, still working on his shaved ice. He slaps a black and white filter on it because Billy looks *baller* in black and white, like some sort of 1920's actor, and then writes *CREEP* with his pointer finger, and posts *that* to Billy's instagram story, too.

Then, for good measure, he takes a bad selfie and sets it as Billy's lockscreen.

Because he *can*.

Because Billy wouldn't share his shaved ice.

Because Billy brought up the fact that Steve likes *guys* by making a *instagram story* about it.

And, sure, Steve knows that he *probably* deserves a little shade for not

telling someone he considers a friend, even though at one point in their lives Billy was decidedly Steve's, like, *arch-nemesis*, but *still*. Maybe it's something he *also* should've told the guy he road-tripped out to California with, who he's renting a house with, too, but like.

He hasn't. So.

"You're the worst," Steve says.

Billy just *grins* at him, like a shark, which must mean that it's *fine*. Like, Billy would've said something mean or punched Steve in the face if he had a problem with it, right? Because Billy's kinda a *mean guy* -- and he's never been too quiet an asshole. He used to be all talk about hating everyone, thinking he was *better* than everyone in Hawkins -- but that stopped the second they hit California soil, like the midwest was driving him crazy, or something, like that monster in that one movie Will made him watch who grew slowly insane the longer he spent inside this one building. Or whatever.

Anyway, the point is that Steve *thought* Billy was kinda an asshole -- not that that stopped Steve from going to California with him, or anything -- but he's not *that bad* anymore.

Which more is just a constant surprise, more than anything.

Steve never knows what to expect from the guy.

"What're you thinking about?" Billy asks. He doesn't *sound* concerned, but Steve knows him; he *is* concerned. Maybe he's worried he crossed a line, or something. Even though he didn't do anything wrong -- just pointed out the obvious.

"Uh, that one movie. With all the ghosts and the bath house? The cartoon."

Billy looks at Steve for a long while, unmoving.

"You mean *Spirited Away*?" Billy finally says. "The *anime*, by Miyazaki?"

"Uh, yeah, sure."

“Oh my GOD,” Billy says, and then he’s taking *another* picture of Steve, phone obscuring the blatant grin on his face.

Later, when Steve checks Billy’s story, he sees a picture of himself with a *stupid* look on his face, and like, a *bunch* of stuff throwing shade about Steve calling *Spirited Away* a cartoon and this whole rant about how Billy’s *embarrassed to even know him* and *exist under the same roof*, or whatever.

But the next pic is just a five second picture of Steve snoozing on the couch on the porch after dinner (and some wine) with no comment and a nice filter, and Billy took it from Steve’s *good side*, so.

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“Just -- *ugh*, would you -- *Harrington*, just *hold still*,” Billy says, two big hands warm on Steve’s shoulders, steadying him in front of a colorful mural outside of Billy’s favorite vegan bubble tea place.

Because Billy? Kind of a foodie, apparently.

It’s not *really* surprising, because he had peppered their road trip out to Cali with all these restaurant stops he wanted to make, all these places that got three-thumbs-up or *whatever* on Billy’s favorite restaurant app. Anyway, *that* had been a surprise, but it had given them something to look forward to, something to *talk* about.

Because yeah, maybe they weren’t *great* friends when they left Hawkins, but they weren’t enemies anymore, either. Steve had just been itching to get out of Indiana a couple years after graduation and Billy had been in need of a little extra cash to make it to California, so they had teamed up to make it happen. Sticking together afterward for the summer was an idea that had formed somewhere between the alien landscape of western Utah and the infinite deserts of Nevada. And then Steve booked the airbnb -- and the rest? Is history.

Steve’s juggling two bubble teas and his hands are kinda going a little numb and wet with condensation because they’re *cold* and “Do you *really* need to instagram this?”

"*Yes*," Billy says, emphatically. "Now, lean against the wall and do that thing where you look bored and sexy and spoiled."

"*What*?" Steve.

"You know, the look that says *I have a trust fund but I'm still slumming it with this loser because I'm an even* ***bigger loser***," Billy clarifies.

Steve makes an outraged face.

"Perfect," Billy says, as his phone makes the shutter-sound.

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is that ur bf? a comment reads under the picture of Steve in front of the mural. There's a winky-face emoji, too. The picture isn't *bad*. He looks hot, yeah, but Steve's also self aware enough to know that he *also* looks like a snotty kid.

WHAT A HOTTIE another comment reads, on the next picture on Billy's instagram, which is just Steve, mouth around his bubble tea straw. The comment underneath that one just has a bunch of like, *really* thirsty emojis.

Billy comments on *both* of those with the rolling-on-the-floor-laughing emoji, which is about as transparent as Billy *gets*.

Which is to say: Steve doesn't *get it*.

Other than the fact that Billy's probably laughing at him, which is always a safe bet.

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Look, Steve doesn't really *like* scary movies, but Billy's super into them, so they kinda watch them, like, all the time.

Like, every three days, *at least*.

Which means that every three days, Steve sleeps *even worse* than usual, which is already pretty bad.

Today, they're watching *It Follows*, which Billy *promises* isn't as scary as *Sinister*, but like, he *also* said *that* wasn't very scary at all, and it *definitely was*. Steve's *super* not okay that their house has an attic, now.

But Steve's also a little tipsy, because he's a few glasses of wine in, because Billy got a *case* of Charles Shaw at Trader Joe's and they could only fit *so many* bottles on the shelf, so naturally they have to plow through the ones that don't fit. God forbid they take up space on the counter.

Or something.

Anyway, he's tipsy and he's sitting next to Billy on the couch and every time he jumps, Billy leans against him, like he can calm Steve down by just *being there*. Or maybe Steve's just leaning against him -- look, it really doesn't *matter* -- it just matters that they're *practically cuddling* and Steve's getting closer and closer to drunk and Billy's *warm* and he *smells good*.

Billy is -- well, he's actually a *really cuddly guy*.

By the time Steve's well and truly *scared*, Billy's got a heavy arm around his shoulder. Holding him down, pressing Steve against his body. Like it's no big.

And like -- it's *awesome*.

Well, it's awesome until about forty minutes in when Steve fucking *screams* at this *creepy ass tall guy* ducking through a doorway and misses the rest of the scene, because his *face* is buried in Billy's *neck*.

And, okay, like -- a foot away, Billy smells great. But with Steve's nose pressed directly up against Billy's skin? He smells *to die for*.

Like clove and like vanilla, like sweat and like the ocean. He smells like the road-trip they took together to get to California, like sleepless highway nights and dawn rising with the windows open. He smells like *home*, which is *stupid*, because Steve hasn't even *known* Billy for that long, but it's painfully true nonetheless.

And -- Steve wishes he could *stay* like this. That Billy's hand would

linger on the back of his neck like it's doing, fingertips moving comfortingly over skin, sending shivers of hot lightning down Steve's spine. He wishes that in an hour, when the movie finishes up and the credits roll, he could just spend the night here on the couch, unafraid in Billy's arms, warm, and safe and sound. He wishes, truly, that maybe his heart would stop *pounding* on the inside of his ribs, too loud, too strong, so *noticeable* that certainly Billy must be able to feel it, too.

"You don't have a sex demon, so you?" Steve asks, once the movie's over.

He's still pressed up against Billy's side -- mostly because Billy has yet to push him away and Steve's just drunk enough to feel like pushing his luck on this.

Billy's quiet for a moment, breathing like he's *thinking*, fingers drum-drum-drumming against his thigh.

"Well, you're not planning on having sex with me," Billy says, matter of fact. Steve can *feel* Billy's voice in his own chest, they're so close together. "So that shouldn't be a problem."

And then Billy's pulling *away*, like Steve *knew* he would. Not too far, but it's still *so much less* warm.

And, like, it's not like Steve's *never* considered having sex with Billy before, but -- just in the passive sort of way where he's a teenage boy who's considered having sex with *every single person* he knows because he's got a *healthy* as fuck sex drive kind of way.

But maybe he's thinking about it *now*.

And maybe, maybe it *is* a problem.

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It's raining *still* the next day, and Billy's going absolutely *stir crazy*, which means that he's now driving *Steve* up the walls with all of his pacing.

Billy's like, the kind of person who needs to be *constantly* entertained,

always doing like fifteen things at once, which means that when he's limited for choice, he goes kinda batshit.

Steve even tried to rope him into some yoga, but gave up twenty minutes in when it became clear that Billy was far more flexible than him and *far* more impatient.

"There's someone blowing up your snapchat," Steve says.

Billy's phone is next to him on the couch. Billy's right below him, planking while Steve rests his feet on Billy's back.

"Who is it?" Billy asks.

Steve picks up Billy's phone and squints at the name on the screen. "Donno. No one I recognize. *Troy*?"

Billy snorts.

"What?" Steve asks.

"They're probably just dick pics," Billy says, like it's no big.

And, like, *what*?

"What?" Steve asks, because he can't not.

He kicks his legs off Billy's back and sits forward, just so he can kind of peer at Billy's face. Billy continues planking, because of course he does.

"Because that's a *thing* people *do*, Harrington," Billy says, like he's tired, like Steve's *stupid* and doesn't *know* what people use snapchat for. Which, *yeah*, he *does*, thanks "Because he's thirsty," Billy says.

"Okay, but why is he sending *you* dick pics?"

Billy drops and then pushes himself up to his knees.

"Do you *really* want the details of my sex life?" Billy asks.

"Is this Troy from the Oakfield basketball team?" Steve asks, in lieu of actually answering that, because he's not about to *embarrass*

himself like that.

“Got it in one,” Billy says, sliding the phone off of Steve’s knee.

“Isn’t Troy like, super gay?” Steve says. “Dude. Don’t *look* at those right now, oh my god.”

Billy squints at Steve, opens up one of his snaps, *looks* down at it, and then *shows* Steve. And like, yeah, it’s *exactly* what Steve thought it would be. Exactly what Billy said it would be.

“*Yup*,” Billy says, *kinda* condescendingly. “Usually you’re super gay if you’re sending dick pics to a guy.” Billy looks at him. “Or bi, I guess. Don’t wanna erase your identity,” and they *still* haven’t talked about *that*, but Billy’s pretty on point, anyway. “But you don’t really seem like that kinda guy. Mostly, because you never use snapchat.”

“Yeah,” Steve says, “but I mean. Like, normally you send them to people who are *interested*.”

Billy looks back at his phone and opens *another* snap from this guy. And then another. And then *another*. Just lets them play out, eyes on the phone.

“That’s probably because I’ve slept with him,” Billy says, and then tilts his phone to the *side*, like he’s trying to get a better *look*.

And okay, *what?*

Like *seriously*: ***what***.

“What?”

“This,” Billy says, and shows the screen to Steve *again*. Waves it around a little, so that Steve can really get the *whole* experience here. “Has been inside me. I don’t know how much more detail you want, pretty boy. Didn’t know that was your *thing*.”

Billy grins, wide and vicious and a little playful, too. He always, *always* reminds Steve of a shark.

Steve feels like his heart is about to crawl straight out of his chest

through his throat.

Steve always thought Billy liked *girls*. He was always so, like *aggressively straight.*

It feels kinda like Steve's brain is just making that computer-error-noise over and over again in his head. It's *echoing*, loud and insistent.

And Steve must look *stupid*, must look *real* dumb, because Billy then says, "What, did you think I was a virgin?"

"*No*," Steve hears himself choke out. "Nope. I didn't think *that*."

Billy blinks at him for a moment, and then goes back to planking.

"Come on, sit on my back so I can do some push ups," Billy says.

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Okay, so *clearly* Steve missed something somewhere down the line.

He facetimes Nancy, says: "Did you know that Billy likes dudes?"

Nancy's face does something *weird* and then she's quiet for a little while before she goes, "Did you *not* know that?"

"No, I mean, I obviously *did* know that," Steve says, trying to save face. Obviously he knew something super important about the guy he just up and went to California with and is now *living* with. Obviously.

"You're an idiot, Steve Harrington," Nancy says, eyes toward the ceiling, because she always sees straight through him. "I thought you knew," she says, a moment later. "I *really* thought you knew."

And that's a weird tone.

"Wait. What does *that* mean?"

"Well, I mean, Jonathan and I weren't going to *pry*, Steve, but --." Her face turns a little *red*.

"Wait," Steve says.

“We thought you were just being private, or taking things slow about making it serious, or --”

“*No*,” Steve says, “we’re not. I -- we’re not --” he swallows. “We’re not *together*, Nance, if that’s what you think.

She couldn’t *possibly* think that.

“Oh,” she says, which means that that is absolutely *exactly* what she thought. “Well,” she says. “If you were, you know that we would support you. Right?”

“I’m not with Billy,” Steve says, flatly.

“Yes,” Nancy says, squinting at her phone. “You made that clear. But,” she says, lips pursed, like she's trying to read him through the screen , “do you *want* to be?”

Steve groans and then flops down on his bed, back first. He bounces a bit and Nancy laughs, presumably at his theatrics. Or his misfortune. Either, or.

“I donno,” Steve says. “I thought he was, like, super straight.”

“What, you actually took all of his ridiculous posturing at face-value?” Nancy asks, making a face. “Steve, you really *are* an idiot.”

“How was I supposed to know it was *posturing*? He seemed pretty vehement about it, okay?”

“Steve, he was like *famous* for ditching girls before it got too serious. Everyone was *always* talking about how he never put out.”

“I *know*,” Steve says, with another groan. “I thought he was *picky*, okay? I assumed he *sometimes* got laid. But with, like, college chicks. Or housewifes, or something.”

“Maybe college guys,” Nancy says. “Or househusbands.”

“*Nance*,” Steve whines.

“I can’t believe you didn’t know. He checks out guys all the time.

He's worse than *you*, Steve."

"Uh, no he *doesn't*," Steve says, because at least he's pretty damn positive about *that* one.

Billy does *not* check out guys, at least when Steve's around, because Steve's *always* looking at Billy, and he would *definitely* notice if Billy's eyes were straying. And they don't. Billy's pretty good at not ignoring Steve when they talk, unless he's *trying* to be an asshole. Anyway, he mostly just spends his time taking pictures of what they eat and all the stupid things Steve does, memorializing it forever on instagram -- and sometimes, snapchat.

So *no*. Billy doesn't check out guys all the time. Steve would *notice*.

Right?

--

"So, is that guy still hitting you up on snapchat?" Steve asks.

Apropos of literally *nothing*.

They're sitting on the porch, drinking -- or rather *gumming* at -- these alcoholic freezy-pops they made the other day. The pops are just rum and fruit, tossed in a blender, and then poured (badly, god, the shit was *all* over the kitchen floor) into these little (expensive) ziploc baggies that look like otterpops, but that zip-lock at the top.

But maybe they're *kinda* phallic and so *maybe* Steve's thinking about dicks and *maybe* that translates, somehow, to Billy's thirsty snapchat guy.

Or maybe Steve's just been curious for *days*. It's totally not a thing.

"Not tons," Billy says, with a shrug. "Not getting anything back is pretty demoralizing."

Which is -- good, Steve guesses. It's definitely good. He gets the *odd feeling* that he'd be kinda jealous, if Billy *had* sent something back. Which is like, *highly* introspective of Steve, he knows. Very self-aware.

Look, he's growing as a person, alright?

Steve's onto his third freezy pop -- peach and rosemary -- when he looks over at Billy, who's just tonguing at his own frozen boozy snack, which happens to be blackberry mint, when Steve decides to just bite the bullet. Billy's looking at him, and not at all of the people wandering down their street, so it feels like a good time.

"I didn't know you were gay," Steve says.

Billy nearly *chokes*. "*What?*" he asks, eyebrows all the goddamn way up his forehead.

"I didn't know you were --"

"Yeah, oh my god I *heard* you," Billy says, interrupting him. "I just -- *what*? How did you not know I was gay?"

"You never *said*!" Steve says, gesturing with his freezy pop. Like this is somehow *Billy's* fault.

"*You* never said you were *bi*, but it was pretty obvious. I got there in the end," Billy says. "Or pan. Or *whatever*. I don't wanna assume, *since you never said anything*."

"But," Steve says, even though he doesn't really *have* anything to argue. "You were always -- all about girls in Hawkins."

Because yeah, okay, *maybe* Steve's always paid an unnatural amount of attention to Billy Hargrove, even when they were enemies. He's just got this strange *magnetism* about him. Steve's weak for it.

"It was *small town Indiana*," Billy says. "Yeah, sure, it's the twenty-first century and all, but I still didn't wanna get *killed*."

"Oh," Steve says, feeling a little stupid.

Because yeah, the only other kids that were *really* out in Hawkins were all super rich. Not from the wrong side of the tracks like Billy. And Billy's dad? From the little Steve knows, he's a *dick*. Steve gets the gross feeling that Neil Hargrove would've killed Billy himself if he'd heard his son even remotely leaned that way.

“Jesus,” Billy says, dragging a hand through his hair.

“Sorry,” Steve says.

“Don’t be,” Billy says, quick. “Guess I should’ve told you.”

“*I* should’ve told you. About me, I mean,” Steve says. “Liking cock.” Because they’re *friends* and he had been sort of...unnecessarily nervous about outing himself to Billy.

“Three cheers for cock.” Billy says, grinning, easy, as he taps his freezy pop against Steve’s. Like they’re *toasting.*

When they both go quiet again, Steve’s eyes on the people walking down their street, it feels a bit more comfortable. Like there’s nothing pressing down on Steve’s shoulders, weighing him down. Like they’ve *finally* addressed the elephant in the room -- and then another one, that Steve hadn’t even *seen.*

“Nancy thought we were dating,” Steve says, after a long time. After dusk starts creeping into the sky. After they’ve talked again, about stupid shit, nothing important. “Or banging, anyway.”

“Nancy knew, and you *still* thought I was straight?” Billy asks with a laugh. “Jesus, pretty boy. You really *are* dense. I thought you guys talked about everything.”

“I mean, we talk about *mostly* everything,” Steve says. “IDK man, she said she was trying not to pry.”

“Remind me to send her a thank-you card.”

Billy *sounds* sarcastic, but Steve knows that he’s, like, super appreciative. He *hates* people prying into his business, so he’s probably pretty impressed that Nancy didn’t try and get all up in his business.

“You never noticed Max calling me a *big fat homo*?” Billy says, shifting so that his feet are propped up on Steve’s knee.

“I mean I *did*,” Steve says. “I just thought you guys were just generally being mean to each other. Like, all the time.”

“We *were*,” Billy says. “But we generally keep our insults pretty truthful.”

Like that’s not *weird*.

“Well, you’re not *fat*, so,” Steve says.

Billy pats his stomach through the thin cotton of his shirt. He’s like -- so far from fat that it’s not even *funny*. He’s all hard planes of muscle and bronzed skin. Like some kind of *adonis*.

“Aw, you think so, Harrington?”

“Shove it, *Hargrove*,” Steve says, and he *wants* to push Billy’s feet off of him, *wants* to tell Billy to go get them some more freezy pops, because Steve’s itching to try the tequila and lime one, but.

But Billy’s grinning at him, wide and warm, and the heat of his body is seeping through to Steve’s *bones*, from where his feet are balanced on Steve’s bare leg, so.

So.

--

Later, Steve is *stupid* drunk. Like, absolutely *plastered* and they’re back inside, smoking in Billy’s room with the windows wide open, a perfect summer breeze drifting in one window and out the other. Ruffling Steve’s hair. Boosting his spirits.

Steve feels like he’s *floating*, like he’s dreaming. Like he’s never been better in his *life*.

Billy’s got something smooth on the stereo and it’s *good*.

So good.

“Hi,” Steve says, turning onto his side so that he can *properly* look at Billy.

They’re on the bed, just sprawled out next to each other in the ocean of Billy’s sheets. When he looks at Billy, Billy’s already looking at

him, eyes dark in the dim light of the room.

Steve's never really understood the phrase *bedroom eyes* before. But now? *Yeah*, he thinks he *gets it*.

"Hi," Billy says. "Feeling good?"

He blows out a breath of smoke and it fills the air between them, like a cloud. Like Steve's truly floating through the heavens.

Through the haze, Billy looks beautiful. Looks untouchable. Like he might just fade away, right then and there. And Steve *aches* to touch him, his gut feeling suddenly empty, twisting with the desire to get his hands on Billy.

Because, *god*, he's just now realizing that he wanted to for so *long*, but Steve generally tries not to waste *too* much thought on people who aren't interested in him. So he hadn't even truly *recognized*.

But now that he knows Billy likes guys? It changes *everything*.

"So good," Steve says. "Wanna shotgun?" he asks, before he can think any better of it.

Billy doesn't *move*, doesn't *say* anything -- just *looks* at Steve. Long and hard. Like he's *thinking*. Or maybe he's just *really* stoned. Steve wouldn't blame him. He can hardly string two thoughts together, but in the best kind of way.

After what feels like *forever*, he finally licks his lips with that sinful pink tongue of his and says, "Okay, sure."

Before Steve can even think twice, Billy's sitting up and pulling Steve with him, sure hands on Steve's arms, *guiding* him until Steve is kneeling in between Billy's spread legs.

"*Hi*," Steve says again, and Billy echoes his grin. It's something easy and pleased, and Steve wants to eat it up, wants to keep this shimmery soft moment forever.

"Hi," Billy says, a little amused.

He takes another toke, smoke filling his lungs and mouth as Steve watches him, attention rapt.

Surely Steve must be *dying*, because then Billy's hooking a thumb underneath Steve's chin, a silent invitation to lean forward. Steve tips forward, balancing himself on Billy's shoulders because he's dizzy with it, unsteady. Fingers sliding, moving, feeling over soft cotton and warm muscle underneath. Indulgent.

And then Billy's blowing out white smoke, Steve's lips only a breath away from Billy's. Steve inhales, focus half on the smoke and half on the heat he can feel radiating off of Billy's skin, torn and tangled together, until it all becomes one whole indulgence. He takes Billy's breath into his lungs, lips still hovering so close. He holds it in, hovering close still, refusing to break away from Billy's gravity.

When Steve finally breathes out, he does it with his lips just *barely* ghosting over Billy's. He *watches* Billy inhale, *watches* the way Billy doesn't pull back, doesn't shy away.

And so, Steve leans just a fraction of a millimeter closer and kisses him, closing the gap until he can feel the soft press of Billy's lips against his own. It feels like time just *stops*, standing still in the dreamy, hazy glow of the room. In the warmth of Billy against him. In the moments in between.

Steve is hesitant, because Billy *freezes,* hand on Steve's side, but.

But.

Something slots into place when Billy finally *moves* and kisses him back.

Billy kisses like he does everything else: expertly. Full of confidence and skill, soft but fearless. When his tongue teases at Steve's lips, Steve *opens* for him, melting under Billy's touch, his hands finding purchase at the dip of Steve's hips. Firm, fever-hot.

It's *perfect*, Steve thinks. It's the best goddamn dream he's ever *had*.

But before Steve can even *think* to deepen it, to lick into Billy's mouth or pull him down and into the soft embrace of the bed, Billy's pulling

back. Pushing Steve away.

He looks *afraid*.

The noise that escapes Steve's mouth is involuntary and *pained*. Confused, too. It would be embarrassing, if he wasn't so blazed.

"Steve," Billy says, like he's trying to explain.

But Steve's chest *kinda* feels like it's being torn in two.

"No, it's -- it's fine."

God, why won't any of his *limbs* work? It feels like Billy's bed goes on for *forever* as he's trying to push himself out of it, trying to scramble away with hands and feet that just won't *cooperate* because he's *drowning* in the sheets and they just won't let go.

"*Steve*," Billy says -- and Steve doesn't remember the rest.

--

They don't really *talk* about it.

Billy *probably* thinks Steve forgot, because he was so fucking *trashed* (god, he woke up with the *worst* hangover, that next day), but Steve *remembers*.

He just doesn't know what to *do* about it.

--

Billy's shuffling around in the kitchen a couple weeks later, dancing around in stocking feet, grooving out to Chromeo when Steve wakes up and wanders in around noon.

"*Wow*," Steve says, watching Billy slide across the kitchen floor as he sings, badly, into a spoon.

Billy's not wearing pants. Just boxers and a threadbare Van Halen tee. It's got holes pretty much everywhere and isn't so much black as it is *grey*, but Steve's seen Billy in it no less than thirty times, which

means that it's *probably* his favorite shirt.

Even if his *other* favorite shirt seems to be *no shirt*.

"*Must've been high when I metchoo*," Billy sings.

He *slides* and shuffles around Steve to get to the fridge. Grabs the cashew milk and dances back toward the counter, measuring out the milk into a measuring cup, and then into whatever bowl he's using.

"Out of my mind when I decided to love you."

And Steve can't help but just *stare* as Billy groves around the kitchen, as he moves around and grabs ingredients for -- what looks like vegan pancakes with blueberries and walnuts.

He's *gorgeous*. He's the most beautiful damn thing Steve's ever seen, perfect in the clothes he slept in, with his bedhead and the pillow's creases still on his cheeks. Carefree and loose and still a little hazy with the refreshing spirit of sleep. It's like, Steve's *favorite* Billy-vibe.

God, he's been so *stupid*. He can see it now, all spread out in front of him, like a disaster of a collage. Colors garish, subject *obvious*.

A lot of things make sense, now.

Steve doesn't give Billy a chance to turn on the stove.

He crosses the kitchen in three steps, cornering Billy against the counter, stepping into his space before even sees Steve coming. Before he can decide to run away.

Chromeo is still boppin' along in the background. And *seriously*, this song is such a jam. It's got Steve feeling giddy, feeling *stupid*, but in the best way -- but maybe that's just *Billy*.

"Uh, *hey*?" Billy says. For once, he looks surprised. Like Steve *actually* caught him off-guard.

"*Hi*," Steve says, fingers reaching up to brush over Billy's cheekbone. "I'm gonna kiss you now, okay?"

Billy takes a breath. Then, he nods, eyes on Steve, on his eyes and then his lips.

When Steve kisses Billy, it's better than the first time. Warm and soft, the flavor of toothpaste and watermelon juice. It's deep and heated before Steve can even breathe, Steve's heartbeat kicking up to a hundred to compensate for the need, the want, the desire.

Kissing Billy is infinitely better sober, because Steve can catalogue every piece of it -- the way Billy's hand slots in around the back of Steve's neck, the way his tongue teases against Steve's, the way their bodies fit together when Steve presses in, and in, until Billy's back hits the counter.

This time, when Billy pulls back and breaks the kiss, he doesn't look *scared*, doesn't look like he's gonna push Steve away -- he just looks a little hesitant, which Steve can totally work with.

"What's up?" Steve asks, palm on Billy's cheek. It feels *perfect* in his hand.

"You know this can't be a *one night* kinda thing, right?" Billy says. "I can't -- not with you."

"God, I really *hoped* it wouldn't just be a *one night* kinda thing. I want you, like, forever," Steve says, apparently *unable* to not just show his full hand. "But I'd take what I could get, when it comes to you."

"Oh thank fuck," Billy says, pulling Steve back and kissing him stupid.

They make it to the living room, which is really *admirable*, honestly.

"Can't believe I didn't know you liked guys," Steve says, dragging his teeth over Billy's neck, enjoying the way he can make Billy's breath hitch.

"Can't believe you never *noticed*," Billy says.

He pushes Steve down onto the couch and follows right after him, crowding him in against soft, worn leather.

“You were never *looking,*” Steve says, his own breath catching as Billy’s hands wander his torso, as he thumbs over Steve’s left nipple just to see him squirm.

Because Steve was *always* looking at other people, checking out the goods -- and looking at Billy, too.

“Because I was looking at *you*, dummy,” Billy says.

When he takes Steve’s nipple between his forefinger and his thumb, Steve gasps, wet and involuntary, body arching under Billy’s weight. At some point or another, Steve lost his shirt. He hopes they didn’t drop it on the kitchen floor, because he’s been meaning to mop for, like, weeks.

Oh, Steve thinks. He probably says it, too, but Billy’s attentions turn it into more of a moan than anything *conversational.*

And that really explains *a lot*, actually.

“We could’ve been -- *ah!* -- doing this so much *earlier,*” Steve pants, fingernails digging into Billy’s back.

“Could’ve,” Billy says, biting at Steve’s lip, then his jaw, then his neck. Working his way slowly down to Steve’s torso. “But we’re here now,” Billy says, before he gets his mouth on Steve nipples. First the right, then the left.

And Billy is *good* with his mouth. He’s got that oral fixation *down* and Steve is *into it*. How can he not be, with the way Billy makes him squirm and gasp and writhe around on the couch, with the way Billy makes him groan and twist, already aching in his sweatpants. The fabric of them is thin and worn, and leaves little to the imagination when Billy shimmies down Steve’s body and runs his palm over the bulge there, pressing down *just right*, enough for some relief. It’s also not *quite* enough pressure, the perfect tease.

“*Billy*,” Steve says, getting his fingers into Billy’s hair in encouragement. “Oh my god, *please*.”

“Knew you’d be spoiled as shit in bed,” Billy says, sounding pleased with himself. “Fuckin’ love it.” Or maybe, pleased with the discovery.

Steve makes a fist in Billy's hair and *pulls*, enjoying the way Billy goes a little loose, a little pliant, eyes going dark and desirous as he looks up at Steve. It's a fucking good view, Steve thinks, Billy with his eyes trained on Steve and his hand on Steve's cock, even if he's teasing Steve through his pants. It's hot as sin. Steve wishes he could take a *picture*. Thinks that he *might*, later, if he gets a chance. Hell, Billy would probably stick out his tongue and *pose*.

"Billy," Steve says again, *tugging* again.

And Billy sounds delighted when he laughs at Steve's whining, still laughing as he pulls Steve's sweats down around his hips and lets his cock spring free, hard and wet at the tip.

"God, you're fucking *big*," Billy says, and this time he *does* lick his lips, like his mouth's watering.

And maybe it is, because a second later Billy's got that mouth on Steve, tongue lapping up Steve's cock from the base, in the most sinful analogy of licking an ice cream cone Steve's *ever seen*. It's like, *pornographic*, but in a kind of hilarious way. *Hot*, yeah -- desperately so -- but also fucking ridiculous. But, because it's Billy, it *works*.

Or maybe it works because Billy swirls his tongue around the head of Steve's dick, teasing the sensitive nerves there, until Steve's hips buck up and off the couch and Steve stops *thinking* about the way Billy *looks* and focuses on the way Billy *feels*.

Slowly, Billy gets Steve in his mouth, easing him onto his tongue and into the wet warmth sheltered there. Steve *tries* to stay still, but Billy's hands go to Steve's hips *anyway*, to keep him from wiggling. And then, once Billy gets *all* of Steve in his mouth, lips stretched sinfully around him, to *encourage* Steve to move.

And *god*, Steve doesn't deserve this, doesn't deserve how *hot* Billy is right now. But he has him anyway, and Steve will *take* that.

Billy bobs on his cock, tonguing over Steve's head when he nearly comes all the way off. When he sinks back down, getting *all* of Steve in his mouth, Steve can't do anything but groan and lose himself to it, the experience too overwhelming.

He falls back on the couch and moans, fingers tangled desperately in Billy's hair.

Steve barely *notices* when Billy slows a little, he's so adrift in it. But Billy's fingers are at his hips, pulling Steve up. Encouraging him to move. Spurring Steve to buck his hips. Telling him, none too gently, to *fuck Billy's face*.

"Oh *fuck*," Steve says, hips stuttering, shaking.

But Billy moans the first time Steve thrusts upward and clenches his fist in Billy's hair, and the sound is deep and ardent. And there's *no* mistaking how turned on Billy is. How much he's *into* this.

So, Steve *moves*. He takes his pleasure on Billy's mouth until he's panting and tense, breath coming faster and harder, until he's yanking at Billy's hair, trying to *warn* him when his words won't work.

Billy doesn't let Steve pull him off.

Instead, he moves, shouldering Steve's hips down against the bed, big hands on Steve's hip bones. And then he *goes to town*, sucking Steve off like he's *starving* for it. Wet and messy and fast.

Steve doesn't stand a *chance*.

He comes like a shot, hard and fierce, spilling himself onto Billy's tongue while Billy works him over. Everything goes *numb* and the world turns white for a little while, until Steve realizes that he's panting Billy's name *over and over* and it's getting garbled between his lips.

He has to *pull* Billy off, because Billy seems to delight in tonguing over Steve's head just to make him twitch, just to make his hips stutter each time he does. Steve thinks, maybe, if he didn't pull Billy off, he'd just *keep going*.

Maybe another time.

Because once Steve pulls him off, Billy's already crawling up Steve's body, straddling his hips, boxers already pushed down with his dick

in hand.

He's still licking his lips, still *swallowing* as he works himself over just *looking* at Steve.

"Billy," Steve pants, eyes on Billy's cock. *Hungry.*

"*Fuck*," Billy says, still *touching* himself. "Almost came in my pants just from blowing you, baby. You're so fucking *hot*. I'm so fucking *close*."

"*Billy,*" Steve says, more ardently, but this time he gets his hands on Billy's ass and urges him forward.

Billy *laughs* -- and also *moans*, because he won't quit jacking off, apparently. But Steve can't blame him. He feels like he could probably go *again*, as long as he can catch his breath.

"Open up," Billy pants. "Open up for me, baby."

So, Steve opens his mouth and sticks out his tongue.

Billy shuffles forward on his knees until he's *right there* -- and then he gets the head of his cock *just* on Steve's tongue and starts working himself over like that. Just Steve's hot breath over the head of him, Steve's wet tongue underneath him, and his own fingers working himself over.

"Fuck, *fuck*, Steve --" Billy groans, and Steve can't help but think he's *beautiful* as he breaks apart.

Gorgeous, as he milks himself onto Steve's tongue, panting, moaning, crumbling.

Steve gets his lips around Billy and swallows him down. Licks him clean as Billy breathes heavy above him and buries his fingers in Steve's hair as he comes down.

"Ugh, so *gross*," Billy says, when he sits back on Steve's chest. They're both covered in a sheen of sweat, dripping and hot in their rather un-air-conditioned living room.

“You’re the one who’s *on top* of me,” Steve reminds him. Because, like, for however hot *Billy* is, Steve’s *hotter,* trapped between a wall of muscle and a leather couch.

But Steve can’t stop *touching* Billy regardless, hands on his thighs, fingers trailing up his chest. Can’t stop looking, either, taking all of him in. Like he just can’t get *enough*.

“We could *shower*,” Billy suggests. “And then pancakes. I was *gonna* make you pancakes.”

Chromeo is still jammin’ along in the background. Steve *wiggles* underneath Billy to the beat.

“Shower,” Steve agrees. “But I can’t promise I won’t get distracted by the prospect of the beds upstairs…”

And then Billy’s *grinning*, wide and ravenous and Steve *definitely* wants to keep him forever.

“Okay,” Billy says. “Shower, then more sex, and *then* pancakes.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

--

is that ur bf? a comment reads on Billy’s latest instagram post, which is a picture of Steve sprawled out, shirtless, on a towel at the beach, pink board shorts riding low, ocean waves in the background.

yeah, he’s hot af, right? Billy’s response reads, along with the *fifty* chili-pepper-emojis he typed (Steve counted).

Fifty seems like overkill, *maybe*, but Steve’s *definitely* not complaining.

Author's Note:

tracklist:

magnets - disclosure
secrets - the weeknd

feels like summer - childish gambino
must've been - chromeo feat. dram
crave you - flight facilities feat. giselle
ocean drive - duke dumont
desire - years and years feat. tove lo
shark - oh wonder
electric feel - henry green (gespleu downcast edit)
there for you - martin garrix & troye sivan
warm water - banks (snakehips remix)

more general notes:

cass is the only person i can write 8k in 24 hours for. thanks for always being an inspiration, babe.

wow this isn't in billy's pov. who *am* i???

i highly recommend boozy freezy pops. my favorite combo is peach/raspberry (+rum).

thank you to myriophyllous, for helping me make this happen, like, super last minute. coherency is a *thing* this would not have had!

you can catch me on tumblr, if you are so inclined.